

ACCT Council Meeting Notes

February 2, 2001

9:30 – 12:30

Attendance

Council Members:

Gretchen White, Chair, Department of Transportation
Reg Clarke, Washington Association of Pupil Transportation
Liz Dunbar, Department of Social and Health Services
Glen Hallman, Consumer Representative
Michael Harbour, Washington State Transit Association
Andrew Johnsen, Governor's Office
Thomas Kelly, Office of the Superintendent of Public
Instruction
Marlaina Lieberg, Consumer Representative
Doreen Marchione, Hopelink, representing CTA-NW and the
Washington Association of Community Action
Agencies

Legislative Members:

Staff Members:

Jim Erlandson, ACCT	Cathy Silins, WSDOT
Debra Mendoza, ACCT	Gordon Kirkemo, WSDOT
Don Chartock, ACCT	Jeanne Ward, ACCT

Welcome and introductions

Gretchen White welcomed everyone to the meeting. Audience members were encouraged to join the discussion at any point.

Meeting notes from ACCT December 1, 2000

The council approved the December 1, 2000 meeting notes with the following changes:

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Faith Trimble, **a consultant under contract** with ACCT and the Development Disabilities Council

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The council agreed to add an additional sentence to *Chapter Seven*

The Olmstead Decision and transportation

The Olmstead decision requires states to administer their services, programs, and activities “in the most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of qualified individuals with disabilities.” Since mobility is a critical component of being independent and integrated into society, the Olmstead decision highlights the needs for increased transportation opportunities for people with disabilities.

Under the lead of the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), Washington State is developing a state plan to assure compliance with the Olmstead decision. Transportation will be an integral part of that plan.

Jim Slakey, Director of the Public Transportation and Rail Division, DOT, identified the transportation barriers that impede moving people from an institution to the community and how the work of ACCT will be a critical piece of removing barriers. Jim explained the importance of awareness in the community about the linkage between transportation and affordable housing. Jeanne Ward, representing ACCT and Gordon Kirkemo, representing DOT are participating on the Olmstead work group formed by DSHS. There has been and will continue to be an emphasis on community based living. The Transportation Commission has been supportive of the partnership with DSHS and other state agencies. Jim stated that he will continue to stress this issue with the new Secretary.

Liz Dunbar stated that transportation and housing are very connected. A primary focus of DSHS is to give people more ability to live in the community, rather than institutions. This means they must have an affordable, accessible place to live, as well as support services and transportation. The Olmstead work group is creating an interagency workgroup on housing issues, with the Office of Community Development taking the lead. In many cases people who are currently in an institution are in settings that DSHS operates, licenses, regulates, or contracts with. Yet they may move to places in the community, which may or may not have any connection to DSHS. Assuring that people live in places with accessible transportation may be beyond the Department’s ability to directly influence. It is a larger community issue to offer accessible, affordable housing in places with accessible, affordable transportation. Liz emphasized that a lot of people outside of DSHS need to be part of the solution.

Mike Harbour expressed the importance of knowing in advance what the obligation and demands on the transit system will be. It is important for the Olmstead work group and the ACCT to continue to reinforce with the legislature that if we are going to be able to help people live independently in communities, there has to be the support and the dollars to go with it.

Marlaina Lieberg stated that environmental access is critical and needs to be included in the big picture of accessibility.

Gretchen recommended developing a way to interface a map of current public transportation service areas with a map of affordable housing and to make this information available as people make choices on where to live.

How school districts provide transportation for special education students and students who meet the ADA criteria *Reg Clarke & Sue Carnahan*

Sue Carnahan introduced Roger Eastman, former State Director of Pupil Transportation. Sue explained the scope of pupil transportation in the state and OSPI's role. She explained that the ultimate responsibility for transportation in each individual school district lies with the local school board.

Reg Clark gave an overview of the Edmonds School District #15 Special Needs Transportation Review. He discussed the Individual Education Plan (IEP) and the programs offered (approximately 20 different programs at 60 plus locations). He also covered equipment, expenditures and training. Reg pointed out some of the challenges:

- Programs competing for same or similar trip times
- Schools changing sites for construction
- Significant program time changes or student count changes mid-year
- Addition of programs mid-year
- Addition of program or service expectations without funding
- One-on-one transportation
- Individual needs are different

Sue explained that OSPI is trying to give districts as much information as they can to assist them in making decisions about their transportation operations, coordination opportunities, and the work of ACCT. She pointed out that it is a local decision to participate in the local ACCT Coalitions.

Reasons for School Districts to Coordinate Transportation

- Provide transportation to special needs population who may not have access to other transportation services.
- Enhance public relations in the community.
- Provide more work for part-time school bus drivers, which may help with driver shortage, by providing more hours of work and benefits.
- Access special transportation for district students-districts not only providers of transportation services but users as well.
- More efficient use of public resources/tax dollars.

Issues for Districts to consider

- RCWs that talk about the responsibility of school transportation being solely the local school board's decision on who they are going to transport and what routes they are going to use.
- Districts are not allowed to compete with private enterprise.
- Districts need to be reimbursed their full costs. If they are involved in coordinated transportation they need to be reimbursed for the total cost of whatever they do.
- Coordination of category program funds; knowledge of programs included in coordination; Grant requirements for funding, reporting, and record keeping.

How transit systems meet ADA requirements *Mike Harbour*

Mike gave an overview of the major ADA transportation requirements, Paratransit categories of eligibility, and defining and setting eligibility standards.

ADA issues facing public transportation systems

- Demand for paratransit service continues to grow, even while other services are reduced.
- Other agencies have and continue to eliminate transportation services.
- Paratransit service is taking an increasing portion of the public transportation systems' budgets. At Intercity Transit, over 25% of the operating budget is required for ADA service with 4% of the total ridership.
- Recent legal decisions requiring guaranteed next day service will increase costs for many systems.
- The cost of ADA complementary service may prevent any transit service from being provided to some areas.
- Some members of the public feel ADA paratransit service meets the entire transportation needs of persons with disabilities.

Mike explained that many more people with disabilities are served on fixed route services than the ADA door-to-door service and those fixed route services have been reduced.

Status report on budget and legislative session *Cathy Silins, Jeanne Ward and Council*

Cathy Silins has met with over 34 individual members of the Legislature in both the Senate and the House, primarily transportation committee members within the last 3 and ½ weeks. Cathy has been sharing information on programs such as the Rural Mobility Grant Program, Commute Trip Reduction, and ACCT. All members

consistently think that the ACCT Council is an important entity and that coordination is very important. She explained that the new members are very excited about helping out. Several members of the Legislature have offered to help. They are very willing to sponsor particular pieces of legislation that will help remove barriers.

How do we get funding?

The Department of Transportation submitted an investment plan that did not identify a revenue source. The Governor's budget submitted a transportation budget and as of yet has not specifically identified all the revenue sources that are available for transportation. Hopefully whatever is developed has flexible funding.

This year the senate is responsible for developing the budget first. Cathy will represent the position that was adopted by the council last fall that ACCT needs additional funding for the implementation of coordinated systems in counties that currently have an ACCT grant, and to form coordination coalitions in counties that do not yet have an ACCT grant.

How are we responding to various bills that are coming out?

Jeanne met with representatives from the Washington State Transit Association, special needs advocacy groups, and members of the Transportation Choices Coalition to identify common messages about what is needed from the Legislature to address special transportation needs. If all groups deliver the same message we can be more effective and can support each other's agenda. Jeanne mentioned that there was a great deal of commonality in legislative agendas. Jeanne asked the council how they would like to be made aware of the bills that affect ACCT and what kind of process should be put in place for responding.

The council agreed that Jeanne should receive an affirmative response of a majority of ACCT members before deciding to take a position on a bill and testifying on behalf of ACCT.

Marlaina stated that the files and links related to bills have been sent to her in PDF format. She requested that the links be sent to her in Word format.

SB5739 has been introduced by Senator Gardner to amend the ACCT statute to include a statement of the state's responsibility to address special transportation needs. This bill was requested by the council. Jeanne will testify when the bill is scheduled for hearing.

ACCT Coordination Grant Reports *Wayne Nelson and Karen Parkhurst*

Grays Harbor/Pacific

Wayne Nelson, Transportation Manager for the Coastal Community Action Program in Aberdeen, which is the lead agency for the ACCT planning grants for Grays

Harbor and Pacific County stated that special needs transportation is a critical issue in these two largely rural counties.

The coordinated transportation coalitions identified two critical unmet transportation needs.

1. Job access for low income workers

In the Twin Harbor area most entry-level jobs are with the hospitality industry on the coast. Because most shifts are in the evening hours workers must have their own transportation to make the 20-mile commute to Ocean Shores from the Aberdeen/Hoquiam area or 50 miles each way from Raymond or South Bend in Pacific County.

2. Out of county medical transportation

Many residents particularly the elderly must travel to Olympia or Seattle for cancer and other specialty medical treatments and unless they are Medicaid eligible they do not qualify for free Paratransit service. Additionally, many veterans get treatment at the American Lake VA Hospital and also need transportation.

Various representatives from DSHS, Employment Security, the Olympic area Agency on Aging, Transits, Catholic Community Services, The County Health Department, Housing Authority, and the Career Transition Center came to the first meetings and all were anxious to participate.

Quinalt Beach Resort is developing a van shuttle between Ocean Shores and Tahola. With full knowledge that there are no guarantees of future funding for this project there is already an impressive array of resources and partners.

The Quinalt Indian Nation is providing a van and is coordinating support services for the van drivers during their nine-month transition to unsubsidized employment.

The Quinalt Resort is providing a van, uniforms and the promise of permanent employment for van drivers who participate successfully.

The Employer Assistance Project sponsored by the Grays Harbor Chamber of Commerce is helping identify driver applicants and is working on support services.

Grays Harbor College is offering GED courses and auto mechanics and maintenance classes to the driver participants.

Grays Harbor Transit has agreed to put drivers through their Drivers Training Program at no charge.

The Coastal Community Action Program is administering the community job placements and also setting basic standards for drivers.

Wayne stated that the best thing so far to come out of the transportation efforts is that Twin Harbor has moved the issue to the front burner. People clearly understand that we can't solve our social and economic problems without first solving transportation problems.

Thurston

Karen Parkhurst, Grant Manager for Thurston County stated that the fastest growing parts of the county are the rural areas and those are the ones that are least served by public transportation. Karen is currently working on coalition building and trying to develop an ownership by the members of the coalition. Specific task groups have been formed in the Developmental Disabilities and senior communities. They have gathered a lot of information through surveys and focus groups. Karen estimates that their inventory will be finished by the end of February.

Karen mentioned that more information needs to be gathered on the timing such as, when are vehicles being used, when are drivers available, and when are the services needed?

Thurston County has been awarded three of the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) grants. They are working together with WorkFirst to provide a workfirst initiative to drivers. They are also working with the Nisqually Tribe. Karen stated that they are about to do a joint public outreach with Intercity Transit to look at some public transportation issues and hoping to insert ACCT issues as well. She also mentioned that they will continue to search out grant opportunities.

They are currently discussing ways to get better coordination and connections for the other counties with their local planning agencies and have offered to draft language to insert in to their plans that talks about special needs transportation.

Karen also mentioned that they are currently working on how to bring technology into the system. Hoping to move forward issues dealing with coordinated billing, data collection, and coordinated dispatch, and trying to find a way to use the broader transportation money to address the ACCT needs. They are also looking at ways to tie programs together.

The community strongly supports transportation for people with special needs and it is valued in our community.

PACT Forum updates *Janet Abbett, Don Chartock, Jim Erlandson, Eric Phillips, Jeanne Ward*

Pierce County coordination model

Eric Phillips discussed a coordination model that the Pierce County Coalition is exploring. The Coalition and a delegation of the PACT Forum are working together to define, refine and complete this model. The model will coordinate rides between

the two largest trip producers: ADA trips and the MAA trips provided through the Medicaid broker. Data collected during a two week period shows that both programs will experience substantial savings through coordination.

Jeanne stated that this model has the potential to demonstrate cost savings and the value of coordination.

Tracking transportation costs

Don Chartock, ACCT Research Assistant explained that part of the ACCT enabling legislation asks us to develop methodologies and to provide support to local and state agencies in identifying and tracking transportation costs. This program is difficult. Some have terrific numbers, however this is not universal. We believe that coordination is good government, that enables us to deliver more special needs transportation for less money, but we need to be able to prove it. Therefore, it is necessary to be able to track these costs and show a before and after affect. The workgroup consists of members from OFM, Employment Security, MAA, DSHS Budget Office and OSPI.

Volunteer Drivers

Jim Erlandson, ACCT Community Coordinator is assigned the task of observing and providing technical assistance to the community forums and coalition efforts around the state. There are currently 19 counties committed to establishing coordinated special needs transportation systems in their communities.

Jim stated that ACCT has been given the task of developing minimum standards to support coordination and remove barriers to coordination within the communities. In line with this task, a workgroup is being put together to investigate issues that surround the use of volunteer drivers.

The issues include:

- Liability insurance
- Vehicle safety standards
- The management and coordination of volunteer programs
- Integration of volunteer driver programs with other nonvolunteer services

Jim will be working with Karl Johanson on putting together a workgroup that will do the following tasks:

- Research existing codes and policies
- Survey other states' experiences in this area
- Examine the legal and liability issues
- Develop minimum standards for volunteer driver programs
- Design an implementation plan with an evaluation component

The work group will prepare a final report to the Council. Jim hopes to have this ready for the August meeting. This will provide useful tools to communities who are

trying to make maximum use of volunteers, especially in rural communities where public transportation dollars and services are minimal. Volunteer drivers and volunteer vehicles are one of the major (and in some cases only) ways to provide for special needs transportation in communities. Jim stated that he was very excited about the progress in improving coordination and special needs transportation in the local areas.

WorkFirst Transportation Initiative

Janet Abbett, with the WorkFirst Division at the Office of Trade and Economic Development has the lead for managing the WorkFirst Transportation Initiative. In year 2000 we applied to the Federal Transit Administration and received funding for seven projects under the Job Access Reverse Commute Program. We are currently working through the FTA to get those projects on the ground and running. We were successful in getting the two million dollar earmark for 2001 and are now soliciting project applications for the new money.

Janet stated that Grant Applications are due April 9th. WTI funds have been specifically targeted for rural and smaller urban areas, leaving the urbans to apply directly to FTA.

Informally, WorkFirst has committed to two million dollars in match for the program. Since then there have been some changes in forecasts and projections for WorkFirst and they are currently reexamining their obligations and commitments of WorkFirst funds. They do not have a formal commitment yet for their two million dollars in match. That decision will be made soon.

Meeting adjourned

Next regular council meeting

Friday, April 6, 2001
9:30 – 12:30

DOT Commission Board Room (1D22)
310 Maple Park Avenue, SE
Olympia, Washington 98504-7387

For questions regarding grant administration, policy and council activities, contact Jeanne Ward, ACCT Administrator, at 360-705-7917 or wardje@wsdot.wa.gov . For information on meetings, agendas, materials, and clerical issues, contact Debra Mendoza, ACCT Secretary, at 360-705-7911 or Mendozd@wsdot.wa.gov .
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